

For immediate release to the ASDB website

ASDB, along with all other special schools for the blind around the country, is preparing for the implementation of the Unified English Braille (UEB) code in January, 2016, the birthdate of Louis Braille.

The current Braille code in use has been updated to streamline some parts of the code, and to add new Braille symbols reflecting changes occurring in the print media. In order to address the implementation timelines for the UEB, Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind has developed a statewide implementation plan for the UEB code. It is located as a separate document on the website.

By way of brief explanation, ASDB has chosen a careful plan to the implementation process, based primarily on student needs. ASDB is very aware that a few states have decided to push for complete use of the UEB code, both for literary works and mathematics. Many other states have chosen a more conservative approach, starting with the literary code, and postponing any action on the mathematics code. The recognized and long standing Nemeth code, different than UEB math, will continue to be used by all ASDB staff until the national controversy over the use of different math codes is resolved.

It is important to understand that changes in the Braille code affect several areas:

- *actual textbooks and related books used in schools (for example classic/contemporary literature)

- *teacher/transcriber training

- *statewide assessment that all students are required to take in selected areas

Existing textbooks and related books cannot simply be removed from shelves and replaced. There is a high cost to Braille production in terms of time and volume. Any parent and school district working with Braille readers already knows the time involved and constraints in securing Braille materials right now. To understand the complexities of production will tell us that every book now in use could not be reproduced in UEB in any reasonable time frame. We have to work with the existing code and materials, and introduce UEB as materials are available. Proficient braille readers will adapt quickly to the code changes. Those students who are beginning Braille readers and those older students just now in transition to Braille reading will need basic instruction in the existing code, with supplemental instruction in the UEB. **No student will be left illiterate because they did not receive training and instructional materials using the UEB code!** For parents and teachers in Arizona, they can rest assured that changes in teachers or schools served by ASDB will not affect the high quality Braille instruction for students. ASDB staff is in constant communication with the Arizona Department of Education to assure that statewide testing remains accessible to Braille readers, and, students will not be penalized for the particular code of Braille they are using. By January 2016, all ASDB teachers and transcribers will have demonstrated proficiency in the UEB literary code, having taken special training. In addition, campus based teachers and regional cooperative teachers will have in-house resources to assist them in maintaining and enhancing their respective Braille teaching skills. Questions regarding this exciting venture and ASDB's action toward it can be directed to the Principal's office at our Tucson campus, or to the Director of each Regional Cooperatives. Thank you!